



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

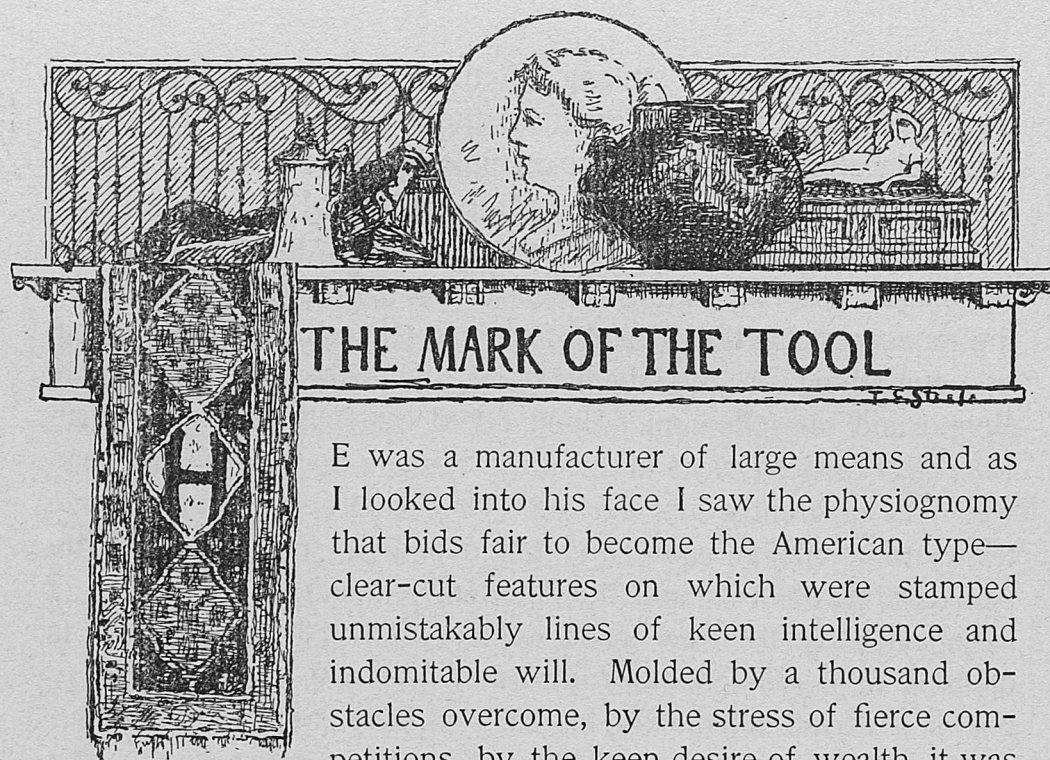
This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



He was a manufacturer of large means and as I looked into his face I saw the physiognomy that bids fair to become the American type—clear-cut features on which were stamped unmistakably lines of keen intelligence and indomitable will. Molded by a thousand obstacles overcome, by the stress of fierce competitions, by the keen desire of wealth, it was the nervous, alert, unrelaxed face of the successful American business man. He was in the furniture line, and as he leaned upon his desk he said thoughtfully, “I wish some one would invent a machine for wood carving that would approach more nearly in its work the qualities that are found in the best work made by hand. We have embossing machines, but the work made by pressure is too shallow for effect, and we have cutting machines that do fairly well, but somehow the work lacks expression.” There was a little pause in the conversation and as I thought of the hundred workmen in the manufacturer’s shops, each but little less a machine than the time-saving device he manipulated, like a flash rose before my mind a vision of the old craftsman in the days when art and labor worked hand in hand. I heard him singing at his anvil as the wrought iron blossomed into leaf and flower, or twisted its spiral tendrils. I saw in his glowing eyes as, pausing to rest, he lifted his tool from the oaken panel, the pride of the artist in his work, the joy of

creating. It was then, with a silent but fervent "God forbid," that I answered the manufacturer's desire for a new machine.

*THE MARK
OF THE
TOOL*

That the sum of human comfort has been increased by modern inventions is undeniably true, but that the sum of human happiness has been made greater is very much to be doubted. For not only is it true that for every human want that is gratified by modern luxury a new want springs into existence to plague us with discontent, but it is also true that we can not reach for the new prizes of life and still hold on to the old. Steam and electricity, and the thousand mechanical devices, have given to the life and habitation of the modern man conveniences and luxuries that by contrast would make the life and home of the Greek of the day of Pericles seem poverty-stricken and comfortless indeed. But the Greek could enjoy beauty with the passion of religion. He could endow a building with the perpetual bloom of youth. He could carve a statue with proportions so just, a harmony so divine, that even its mutilated fragments move our spirits to their depths, and we reverently say, "it is Greek."

The magnificent development of the commercial spirit, the wonderful mechanical inventions, and the union of the two in that method of production called the factory system, are the special characteristics of our age. The factory system has added immensely to our material wealth, but its true worth to humanity will not be determined by the present generation. To us who are in the midst it seems mostly gain; but the future philosopher will weigh with greater accuracy the purchase price of this special development, will offset the profits with the losses to the race, that are losses no less because we are mostly unconscious of them. It is with no pessimistic spirit, and certainly with no despondency of the ultimate outcome, that I wish to speak of certain losses in the way of art that we have sustained in consequence of the development of the commercial spirit and its use of modern inventions. The proposition is that

THE MARK
OF THE
TOOL

there is a decline in the appreciation of the qualities of art and the power of art production, as a direct result of this development. I do not wish to be understood that this decline is the accompaniment of this development. The proposition is square: it is the direct result, the inevitable outcome of its spirit and methods. If we accept as a general definition of the fine arts all those things that are made purely for man's enjoyment, by appealing to either his spiritual or poetic nature through his sense of beauty, and if we accept as a definition of the useful arts those things that are intended for utility only, we find there lies between them a great field that partakes of the character of both. This is the field of the *kunst-gewerbe* of the German, or applied arts. It includes all those objects of use that by design or treatment are made beautiful. On the one hand its production may be dominated by intention of use, beauty coming in simply as ornament; on the other hand, while not losing the idea of use, it may be dominated by an intention of beauty, even of the highest spiritual and poetic kind, as in the illuminated books of the early centuries. This is the art with which we have most to do in our daily life, the furniture, fabrics, carpets, walls and books of our homes, the color and shape of our houses and streets, the physiognomy of towns. It is the chief element in that rich and varied life that gives birth and support to the greater arts of architecture, sculpture and painting. We can not escape its influence if we would. It is a constant, silent worker in our daily life, charming, delighting and stimulating by its presence, dulling into apathy or insensibility by its absence. This great field of production was occupied during the middle ages, the great periods of art, even up into the present century, by the craftsman who combined designer and worker in one. It is now occupied by the manufacturer who employs the designer, the worker, complicated machinery, and salesmen; who watches the market, the tastes of the people and the hundred different things that bear on his commercial

"The true root and basis of all art lies in the handicrafts. If there is no room or chance of recognition for really artistic power and feeling in design and craftsmanship—if art is not recognized in the humblest object and material, and felt to be as valuable in its own way as the more highly rewarded pictorial skill—the arts can not be in a sound condition; and if artists cease to be found among the crafts there is great danger that they will vanish from the arts also and become manufacturers and salesmen instead"

Walter Crane

failure or success. The production of a beautiful object by the craftsman was a simple affair and he was animated by simple motives, of which the artistic was most prominent. Its production by the manufacturer has become a complex matter and the underlying motive, either by the necessities of the situation or the spirit of the times, has become that of profit. This change in the dominant motives of production has been far-reaching in its effects, but I do not intend to refer to it, only as it has affected the artistic quality of the production. The first and most obvious result observed in the new order of things is that coming from the employment of machinery. So largely has machinery taken the place of handicraft in the production of beautiful things that the quality machinery gives, and the only quality it can give, has become the standard of excellence. Mechanical finish, the work of the machine, has taken the place of artistic finish, the work of the craftsman. The mark of the tool has disappeared. The vital touch of the chisel of the fifteenth century wood carver, vigorous and full of character, or delicate as nature's clinging vines, must needs be sandpapered and rubbed down to suit the nineteenth century requirement. We have forgotten that which the centuries of craftsmen knew so well, that the mechanical perfect is the artistic commonplace. It is our factory carpet whose figures are perfectly symmetrical, and not the color-breathed harmonies of the Orient. The perfect flower blooms upon the china of our own fair decorators, and not upon that of the children of the flowery kingdom. If we should build a Parthenon now, we would improve upon the Greeks; the floor would be level, the walls plumb, and the steps in perfect alignment, but it is not improbable the spirit of beauty would escape us in so doing. Mechanical finish is always at a loss of artistic power. The artisan is so much less the artist, so much more the workman. When there is joy of art and the brain of the artist is burning with a thought of beauty, when the hand trembles in its eager-

THE MARK OF THE TOOL

"An artist feels instinctively and perhaps without reflecting why, that the imperfections of manual labor are preferable to the cold and expressionless accuracy which can be insured by the help of a machine"

G. L. Eastlake

"It is one of the wicked ways of our civilization to smooth out all character from workmanship. For idiomatic expression in ornament we have generally to travel back to a remote period"

Lewis F. Day

"Style and Handicraft"

"When the public accepts a mechanical and lifeless substitute for artistic and individual handicraft, the result is a deadening of the artistic impulse and a decadence into the inertia of commonplace"

Brander Mathews

THE MARK
OF THE
TOOL

ness to express the artistic conception, there is no time for mechanical finish; nay more, it is incompatible with artistic expression, for the language of art is always a species of exaggeration, the unconscious emphasizing of points of character. He is the best artist who feels a thing most nobly and most beautifully. He is the best technician, whether with the brush of the painter, the shuttle of the weaver, the chisel of the carver in wood, or the hammer of the worker in metal, whose tool most readily and most vitally expresses the thought of his brain, who feels least the limitations of an artificial idea of finish.

The second artistic quality we have lost in the new order of things is individuality. This arises partly from the fact that a mechanical standard of finish gives but little play for this quality, but more than all from the fact that the designer and workman are not one, as they were in the day of the craftsman. Both have lost by this, the designer because he is not in touch with his material, and the workman in that his work is not creative but imitative. He is a copyist; he lacks the spontaneity, the vitality that comes from the first hand. When it is remembered too, that the production is not unique, but that there will be a hundred or a thousand or ten thousand just like it, the chances for individuality are almost nothing. And so it has come about that it is not expected. The phrase "finished in a workmanlike manner" has lost significance and covers now only mechanical construction and finish. The individuality of an artist or artisan as expressed in his work is one of the most precious qualities it can have. In such work the *technique* is vital and close to the artistic impulse from which it springs. In it you can read the temperament of the artist, his mood, how he thought and felt. The mercurial and fiery spirit of Benvenuto Cellini, the hero of a dozen duels, is molded in the rich ornamentation of every jeweled cup he wrought and shines in the terrible beauty of his *Perseus*. What revelations of himself has Barye not given us in his monumental lions! How we read

the man in the giant strokes that smote the clay into its majestic shape! In the realm of color, Holbein finds his expression in his careful and precise contour, a line precious and full of character; Titian's richer nature in great color harmonies whose modulations are music; Vandyke's elegance in the sweet urbanity of his method, and the magnificent spirit of Rubens in the splendid dash of his brush. In every case it is the outgrowth of individual temperament. It may be considered that I am not making sufficient allowance for the difference that exists between the fine arts and the minor arts. But I reply that in their decorative aspects there is no difference. The division is artificial. Logically it does not exist and historically did not exist until quite recent times. The spirit that gives value to both is the same. Its expression should be modified only by the different materials and conditions. There will come a time, as there has been a time, when he who designs a vase, a table or chair, or a title page, will work in the same spirit as he who designs a picture. Can you not imagine a title page that, to the book, will be as the overture to an opera, that will sum up in its decorative aspect, not the individual thoughts of the book—that were impossible—but its spirit; that aroma that lingers in the memory long after the special thoughts of the book are forgotten. This result was attained in many of the illuminated books of the early centuries. It is to the great credit of the Rookwood Potteries that they encourage above all things this individuality of expression. They work in the spirit of the old craftsman and the artistic results justify their departure from commercial methods. This is largely true of the great firm of Tiffany, in New York, and is pre-eminently so of the Morris establishment in England. It is also true, I understand, in the shops of the Winslow Brothers, in Chicago, whose work in wrought iron is making a revolution in this country. By the necessities of the material in which they work, machinery is used but little. They are blacksmiths, artist-blacksmiths, and the

THE MARK
OF THE
TOOL

forge and anvil, the hammer and tongs, are the instruments of production as in the primitive days. Here we see again the mark of the tool, the individual touch that gives grace and character in the most virile of all metals, and the one that divides with bronze the capabilities of the highest artistic expression. Honor the man at the anvil. He may be mentioned in the trade catalogues only as "the skilled workman in our employ," but it is from him the fire must come if the cold metal is warmed into the vital life of art. It would seem that honor should be divided, and meritorious work should bear the name of the artist along with his employers. Justice would be done and personal ambition stimulated. These are but a few examples, others might be cited, of a revival of handicraft in the applied arts. That these have been financially successful is a favorable sign that there is on the side of the people some desire for something better and more vital in this direction. These are the presages of the dawn of a day that it seems to me must eventually come.

While this is the hope and the promise, it must be confessed that the tendency of the commercial spirit is not in this direction. An American manufacturer visited an exhibition of the "Arts and Crafts" in London, the society founded by William Morris, Walter Crane and others for the encouragement of artistic handicraft and decorative art. After walking through an exhibition that, from the standpoint of art at least, has not before been equaled in England, he said to a companion, "Well, sir, these things don't interest me any. I could turn out a thousand copies of each of them by machinery. Look at that copper dish. If I wanted to, I should just make a die and stamp 'em by the gross." The American expressed the general attitude of the manufacturer toward art. I am not giving the manufacturer's side of the story, but it is only fair to say he is not alone to blame, if to blame at all. He is only part of a great system with many elements, that, so far as art is concerned, is

A few years ago there was a revival of interest in the art of etching. Probably no other art appeals so much to the imagination, is so suggestive of the large thoughts of art, of space, of radiance, of the velvety depths of gloom, of mystery and beauty. In the hands of the great masters of the needle it has proved an expression at once most personal and rich in artistic suggestion. The art publishers saw their chance and at once put upon the market hundreds of plates that were in the worst sense commercial; the potboilers of artists to whom the etching needle was a stranger and the reproduction of pictures unworthy of reproduction in any form, and least of all in the art consecrated by the genius of Rembrandt and Whistler. A dozen publishers have been made rich, and a noble art has been brought into disrepute

T. C. S.

"What are the future prospects of etching considered as a fine art? The winter of obscurity and neglect is over, and the 'glorious summer' of prosperity has come; but herein lies a real danger. With popularity its true artistic side may be ignored; quantity may be considered rather than quality; the art may be 'boomed' and exploited for sordid commercial ends, and men who are incapable of it as an art may ply the making of etchings as a trade"

Frederick Keppel in 1887

THE MARK
OF THE
TOOL

altogether unfavorable. He must sell his products, and experience has taught him that novelty will outweigh beauty ten to one in bidding for popular favor; that art, above a certain easily secured amount, only handicaps him in the competition with his rivals. It is much more with him a question of how rapidly, and consequently how cheaply, a production can be made than how beautiful it can be made. This attitude will not be changed until the people themselves, the buyers, recognize the fact that, except in some few forms of reproductive work, no machine has ever, or ever can, give to a product the vital touch of art; until the people themselves discriminate between the personal treatment that is unique and the commercial design and finish that is common. As an example of the commercial spirit as applied to things artistic, let me notice its effects upon the manufacture of textiles. All know the esteem in which the beautiful eastern fabrics are held, those of Syria and Sicily as far back as the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and later the wonderful production of Venetian looms. These are the treasures of museums, the delight of the studios. The comparison of these fabrics with modern and western productions is instructive, if somewhat disheartening. In prints I believe it is claimed that Persian work of a century ago attained the highest degree of beauty both in color and design. William Morris, in speaking of modern prints, has this to say: "No textile ornament has suffered so much as cloth printing from commercial inventions. A hundred years ago the processes of printing on cloth differed little from those used by the Indian and Persian, and even up to within forty years ago they produced colors that were in themselves good enough, however inartistically they might be used. Then came one of the most wonderful and most useless of the inventions of modern chemistry, that of the dyes made from coal tar, producing a series of hideous colors, crude, livid and cheap, which every person of taste loathes, but which, nevertheless, we can by no means get rid of until we are able

"In the full swing of our commercial century we have discovered that we are losing our sense of beauty, our artistic feeling, and capacity for imaginative design; that our daily work is losing or has lost its interest and romance; that we are paying a heavy penalty for this lopsided progress of ours, in the loss of beauty without and happiness within"

Walter Crane

THE MARK
OF THE
TOOL

to struggle successfully against the doom of cheapness which has overtaken us." In regard to the same thing, in his article on dyeing as an art, William Morris again says: "Dyeing is a very ancient art; from the earliest times of the ancient civilizations till within about forty years ago there had been no essential change in it. * * Any one wanting to produce dyed textiles with any artistic quality in them must entirely forego the modern and commercial methods in favor of those that are at least as old as Pliny, who speaks of them as old in his day."

In the whole field of applied art I think it will be found that the substitution of machinery for handicraft has only resulted in rapidity of production, and generally at the cost of artistic quality. The great carpet looms of the Philadelphia factories are marvelous inventions, but the secret of beauty is still with the people whose devices are the simplest and who throw the shuttle by hand. The maker of books with his steam-driven presses, each capable of giving off its thousands of impressions an hour, can not equal in beauty of type, in decorative effect of the page, or the quality of paper, the Venetian book-maker of a century ago. What will compensate us that in making art popular we have made it bad? The universal desire for cheapness, in the manufacturer as the result of competition, in the people as the desire for a bargain, in all matters of art will defeat its own end.

Some twenty years ago the fresh, unspoiled beauty of Japanese art found its first recognition in Europe and America. It was unique. There was nothing like it in all the world; nor had been. It was the opposite of western thought and methods. With no pretense of giving the reality of nature, it yet gave the essential spirit and life. The birds of the air, the wind-blown reeds, the swimming fish are each realized in characteristic movement and with consummate decorative effect. Never attempting the grand, it attains the beautiful, the quaint, the unexpected. The best art of our time has found in its charm a

"Therefore, granted well-designed type, due spacing of the lines and words, and proper position of the page on the paper, all books might be at least comely and well-looking; and if to these good qualities were added really beautiful ornament and pictures, printed books might once again illustrate to the full the position of our society, that a work of utility might be also a work of art if we cared to make it so. * * * The paper that is used for ordinary books is exceedingly bad even in this country (England) but is beaten in the race for vileness by that made in America, which is the worst conceivable. * * * However, the fact must not be blinked that machine-made paper can not in the nature of things be of so good a texture as that made by hand"

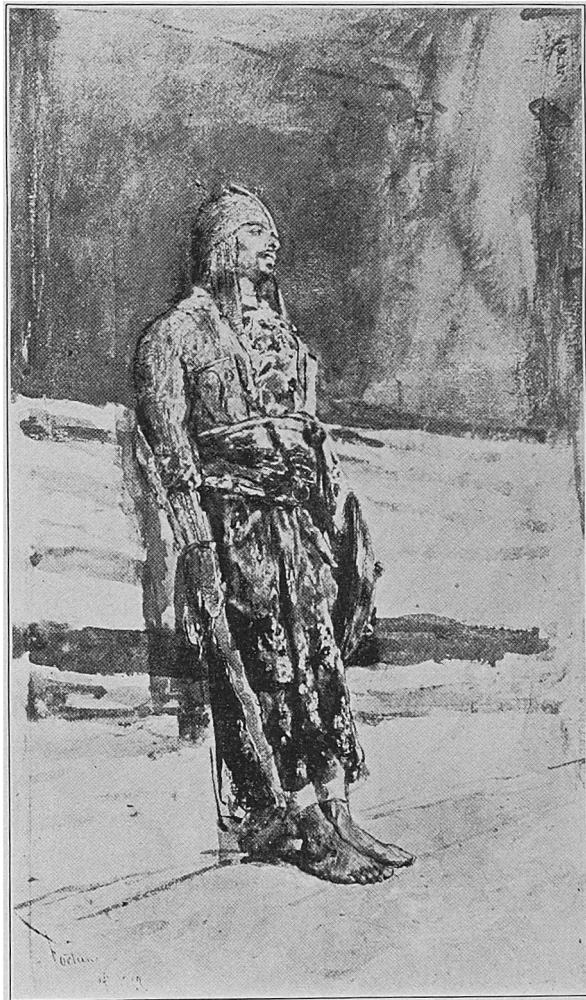
William Morris
Emery Walker

An authority upon the subject says the cost of production of paper has steadily declined until it is marvelously cheap, but that its lasting quality has declined in the same proportion and that in his opinion there is scarcely a book published in the present day that will be in existence fifty years hence. Flimsy workmanship and chemical decomposition of the cheap materials used in the paper and ink will accomplish the destruction

T. C. S.

We buy The Cosmopolitan and imagine we have saved 22 1-2 cents, but upon any fair examination must conclude that the quality of its literature went down with the price of the magazine, and its art at a still greater ratio. The increase in the number of its pictures hardly compensates for their loss in quality. If in illustrations the record of facts is sufficient, and the poetic suggestion of art valueless, then the photographer may take the place of the draughtsman, the process man the engraver, and much money is saved. But, should it not produce in the heart of every American a feeling that is more than regret that the one single art in which we have stood preëminent, that of wood-cutting, should be doomed to extinction, and by a mechanical process not better but cheaper?

T. C. S.



saving influence. Strange as it may seem, it has contributed an element to the most characteristic art movement of the nineteenth century, modern impressionism. The attitude of the Japanese artist toward nature in certain respects is that of the impressionist. When a decided demand for Japanese wares first developed in this country, it was suggested that American capitalists might find the flowery kingdom a profitable field into which to introduce the factory system. Their artisans were scattered through hundreds of towns and villages. By concentration of the craftsmen and division of labor, with modern machinery, and the wonderful talent for piquant and taking decoration possessed by the Japanese, it was supposed astonishing financial returns might be secured. This suggestion has been carried into effect and there is nothing more pathetic in the industrial struggles of any people than that resulting in the decadence of Japanese art to-day as the result of American enterprise. This decadence is already well advanced and there is hardly a doubt but that Japanese art will go down before our commercialism, as the native arts of India disappeared before that of England. The government has become alarmed and is endeavoring to arrest this by establishing art schools and a national museum, and by trying to buy back some of the great masterpieces of Japanese art that are in private collections in this country and Europe. But they have commenced too late.

While not going farther into special examples, there are a few general thoughts I should like to express. David A. Wells in one of his social papers says that on account of new inventions and improvements that are constantly being made, the capacity to produce a certain amount of work is doubled every eight years, and that this has been going on for a great length of time. This means that the work that is being done by one hundred men to-day will be done eight years hence by fifty men, and in less than fifty years by one man. President Gompers, of the Federation of Labor, says that here is the true reason of indus-

THE MARK OF THE TOOL

*"Steam machinery, like
a many-headed, many-
handed dragon, rules
industry literally with a
rod of iron, and fain
would make art prisoner
too, for its profit, but
that its touch is death"*

Walter Crane

THE MARK
OF THE
TOOL

"But while making the best of these conditions, we need not acquiesce in them or maintain their permanence. At any rate we may fight a good fight with commercialism.

The evils of heartless and unloving production under the grind of an unnecessary greed, are patent enough to lead us to reflect that we have after all in these matters a choice. We need not spend our money on that which is not bread."

Edward S. Prior

trial trouble; that men are thrown out of employment by labor-saving inventions faster than new industries are founded. One can not but wonder where all this will end and we are reminded of that passage in Mr. Morris' Utopian dream, *An Epoch of Rest*, where he tells us that so desperate had the condition of the people become that they arose in their might and broke to pieces every machine in the land; and he further says that through their long slavery to the machine, they had forgotten how to do things with their hands and had to learn over again through long and painful experience the simplest handicrafts. This reflection is somewhat aside from my subject, but there is a phase of the social question that does bear directly upon it. Times of prosperity when factories are running and all have work enough are scarcely less free from discontent than when times are bad. When the wolf is at the door it is more outspoken; it is urgent then, and looks you square in the eye, but it exists at all times. There is a constant uneasiness in the monotonous life of the worker. It might be interesting to inquire how much of this is due to the fact that machinery and the factory system have almost banished the craftsman off the face of the earth, and with him has gone content. The architectonic instinct, the desire to create, to construct, to imbue with beauty, is one of the primal instincts of humanity. It started with man when he left barbarism. It has grown with his every growth in civilization, at once its impulse and the expression of its highest ideals. For this there is no place in the modern industrial system. That production may be increased, division of labor is carried to the utmost, until a man stands by the side of a machine and makes the one-hundredth part of an article, day after day, and week after week, and social economists wonder that when there is bread enough there should be discontent! Life is more than bread, and a system that makes so much of *per cent.* and so little of men may serve its generation well, may embody the highest ideals of its day, but is ultimately doomed to destruc-

"The delight in beauty, be it of light, color, form or sound is a common possession and a necessity of life, as in the higher sense it must always be, so long as the human has any claim to being the higher animal"

Walter Crane

tion. To every man should be given not only work, but *joy* in his work. He should love it, have pride in it, regard it as the expression of his strength, of his sense of proportion, of fitness of art. That this once existed is not a dream. It is as well established as any historical fact. There was a time when from father to son descended the knowledge of a craft, and the old industrial guilds were organizations that answered not so much to our modern labor organizations as great reservoirs of skill and tradition. In the great museums are precious witnesses of such a time, in iron and bronze, in wood and stone, in stained glass with its heart of fire, in books and bindings, in jewelry and fabrics from famous looms, in the countless objects of use or beauty made by the craftsman when art gave solace to labor. Under such an industrial system the old temples and mediaeval churches were built. The cathedral represents not only the designing architect but the individuality of every workman engaged in its construction. Into it went all his personal skill, sense of proportion, love of the material and the caressing touch of his tool, until the heavy stones were translated into beauty and mystery. If the western traveler pauses somewhat in its dim aisles and feels his spirit uplift in the great spaces of its arches, it is because in their construction and in every part, from the gargoyles on the roof to the foundation stones of its towers, went the life of its builders—their devotion, joy and love of their art.

Cathedrals are not built by the contract system, and "Art, which is the flowering of life, is purchased only at the cost of life."

THE MARK
OF THE
TOOL

T. C. STEELE